



Transportation Decisionmaking: Information Tools for Tribal Governments

Introduction to Transportation Planning

What is Transportation Planning?

Transportation planning is the process of developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, and financing the area's transportation system to achieve the community's long-term transportation goals and vision. It looks for ways to solve current transportation problems while anticipating and addressing issues likely to occur in the future. Planners and Tribal governments use this information to make well-informed decisions on how to spend money set aside for transportation projects.

What Are the Benefits of Transportation Planning?

The most important benefit of transportation planning is that, by involving the public in the planning process, it helps to identify transportation-related needs. It can also be used to choose the best ways to address these needs in the interest of implementing the Tribe's transportation vision. Other benefits include:

- Anticipating and managing orderly growth and development;
- Minimizing the cost of buying land for transportation facilities, especially in areas with natural or cultural resources that should be preserved;
- Enhancing collaboration among agencies; and
- Distributing and spending money based on the community vision to create a useful and efficient transportation system.

What Are the Key Products of Transportation Planning?

There are two key documents developed as part of the transportation planning process: the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

LRTP

The LRTP is the defining vision for the area's transportation system and services over the next 20 years or more. The LRTP should:

- Cover at least the next 20 years;
- Address all modes of transportation, including vehicles, transit, pedestrians, and bicycles;
- Contain projects that can be implemented based on funds expected to be available;

- Address potential environmental problems and their solutions; and
- Be developed with early and continuous public involvement.

Federal regulations require Tribes, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Indian Reservation Roads program, metropolitan planning organizations (MPO), Federal Lands Highway (FLH) of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and State governments to develop an LRTP.

TIP

The TIP is a multiyear prioritized list of transportation projects being considered for Federal funding. For a project to be included in a TIP there must be funds available for the project over the life of the TTIP, usually three to five years. The TIP is:

- A means of allocating limited transportation funds to projects and programs;
- A list of transportation projects to be implemented in the next three to five years;
- A list of all transportation projects proposed for Federal funding; and
- Limited to only projects that have an identified funding source.

Federal regulations require MPOs, the Indian Reservation Roads program (IRR), Federal Lands Highway (FLH), and State governments to develop a TIP for their jurisdictions. While not required, Tribes are encouraged to develop their own TIP.

What Is the Transportation Planning Process?

There are three different processes involved in transportation planning: planning for metropolitan area, States, and BIA regions. The plans are related in that projects from the MPO TIP and the IRRTP are included in the Statewide TIP. Tribes are encouraged to participate in MPO and State planning so that their needs are considered when developing the plans.

Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process

In metropolitan areas with a population over 50,000, MPOs are responsible for transportation planning. The MPO planning process involves the participation of key stakeholders, including the business community, advocacy groups, environmental organizations, and Tribal governments.

Since Tribes located in or near the metropolitan area will likely be affected by planning decisions made by the MPO in developing its LRTP, these agencies are required to consult with Tribes located within their planning area to ensure that the Tribe's concerns are addressed and their needs met. Tribes located adjacent to or near metropolitan areas are encouraged to participate in MPO planning as well since MPO planning decisions could affect conditions on Indian lands.

After the LRTP is completed, MPOs develop a TIP. MPOs, Tribes, IRR, and FLH generate a list of transportation projects and services intended to implement the planning vision and goals. These projects are then submitted to the State for inclusion in the State TIP (STIP).

State Transportation Planning Process

The statewide planning process should reflect the needs and interests of a wide variety of stakeholders and transportation system customers. Through comprehensive public involvement efforts, stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the State LRTP and STIP.

The State LRTP covers transportation planning across the state. As part of this planning, States must consult with Tribes when developing the State LRTP. They are also required to consult with Tribal governments when considering a project that might negatively affect environmentally sensitive areas.

States also develop a State transportation improvement plan—a prioritized list of every transportation project in the state planned over the life of the STIP, usually four years. TIPs from MPOs and IRR must be included in the STIP if they are to receive Federal funding.

Indian Reservation Roads Transportation Planning

The IRR TIP is a multi-year listing—usually three to five years—of transportation projects on Tribal lands within each IRR region. A project must be included in the IRR TIP to be eligible for Federal funding. The IRR TIP:

- Must include eligible projects from all TTIPs in the BIA region;
- Is developed by BIA from TTIPs or other Tribal actions;
- Is organized by year, State, and Tribe; and
- Must be included in State TIPs to be eligible for Federal funding.

The IRR TIP is composed largely of projects proposed by Tribes. Tribes are encouraged to develop their own TIP to help prioritize their transportation needs and ways to address them. The BIA, FHWA, and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must encourage and assist Tribes in transportation planning upon a request from a Tribe. Additionally, State governments and MPOs must consult with Tribes in their jurisdiction and consider the Tribe's best interests when developing its own transportation plans and programs. Finally, Tribal Technical Assistance Programs (TTAP) should actively coordinate with the BIA and Tribes to provide training and technical assistance in transportation planning activities to Tribes.

What Barriers Exist for Tribal Participation in Transportation Planning?

Tribes should be aware of common barriers to their effective participation in the State and regional planning processes, including:

- Tribes' sometimes interpret Federal regulations governing the IRR and other related programs differently than FLH, creating a conflict between Tribes and FLH.
- Tribal planners often have less experience than planners in other transportation organizations. This can discourage coordination and affect communication.
- Training opportunities for Tribes are scarce because of significant financial and staffing shortages.
- Many Tribes have not developed transportation visions and plans. This limits their ability to identify goals that are consistent with those of regional and State planning. This might make it difficult for Tribes to express their needs and goals and to have them reflected in metropolitan, State, and local transportation plans.
- Tribal planners frequently have other responsibilities that might be higher priorities than transportation issues, limiting the time staff can dedicate to transportation planning.

By recognizing these barriers and developing strategies to address them, Tribes and government agencies can work together to create an effective planning process.

What Is the Transportation Decisionmaking Information Tools for Tribal Governments series?

This summary is based on the module "Introduction to Transportation Planning," one of eight modules in the series *Transportation Decisionmaking Information Tools for Tribal Governments*. This series, written by the Federal Highway Administration Office of Planning, is meant to educate Tribal planners and decisionmakers about the Tribal transportation planning process and to provide them with program information. The full module can be found on the FHWA web site at:

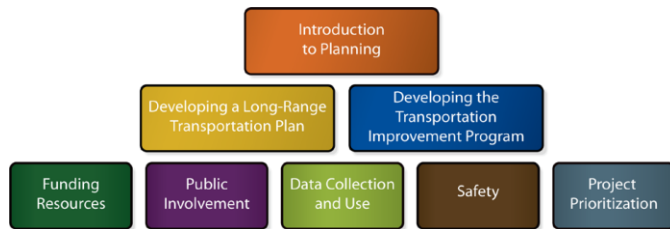
<http://www.tribalplanning.fhwa.dot.gov>

The eight modules in the series *Transportation Decisionmaking Information Tools for Tribal Governments* are:

1. Introduction to Planning
2. Developing a Long-Range Transportation Plan
3. Developing the Transportation Improvement Program
4. Tribal Transportation Funding Resources
5. Public Involvement
6. Data Collection and Use
7. Safety
8. Project Prioritization

Figure 1 shows each of the modules and how they relate to each other.

Figure 1: Modules in the *Transportation Decisionmaking Tools for Tribal Governments Series*



Additional Resources

Transportation Planning Capacity Building Website:

<http://www.planning.dot.gov/tribal.asp>

FHWA Tribal Transportation Planning

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/tribaltrans/index.htm>

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